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ABSTRACT

Five position papers developed by the Division for the Visually Handicapped, Council for Exceptional Children are presented. N. Bryant, in "The Continuum of Services for Visually Impaired Students," outlines program alternatives for visually impaired students. S. Spungin ("The Role and Function of the Teacher of the Visually Handicapped") considers such aspects as assessment and evaluation, educational and instructional strategies, guidance and counseling, and administration and supervision. In "Specialized Certification," J. Stager cites legal requirements for specialists to help provide a free appropriate public education. "Funding" is the topic of the paper by E. Long which considers such topics as administrative responses to generic funding. In the final paper, "The Role and Responsibility of the State Education Consultant for the Visually Handicapped," the State Education Consultants for the Visually Handicapped suggest an array of roles and training requirements for consultants. (CL)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

The following collection of papers represents the collective thinking of the membership of the Division for the Visually Handicapped (DVH), Council for Exceptional Children, with reference to current issues concerning the education of visually handicapped children and youth. The organization recognizes the importance of taking a consolidated position on various issues for the purpose of providing informed, professional input in both local and national arenas which may impact the quality and extent of educational services provided to the visually handicapped. For this purpose, a process was adopted which has allowed for maximum review and revision by the DVH membership so that position papers written by individuals truly reflect the opinions of the total membership.

During the period 1979-81, seven position papers have been written, published in the DVH Newsletter, and discussed in open forum at three gatherings of the membership (CEC 1979, Helen Keller Centennial, and CEC 1980). In addition, written comment has been solicited and incorporated into the revised position papers which appear in this publication. Of the seven, five position papers have been accepted and are contained herein. Two position papers are still in the process of revision for approval by the membership and three additional papers are now ready for review.

The format of this publication is designed to allow for additions and easy use of the various papers depending upon need. Permission is granted to members to reproduce this publication in total or in part when credit is given to the Division for the Visually Handicapped and the individual author of the position paper.

It is the sincere hope of the Executive Officers and the Publications Committee to DVH that this material will be useful to you in your professional role. Your comments and suggestions are welcome. You are also encouraged to submit additional issues and papers for review by the membership for possible inclusion in this publication. It is only with a consolidated effort that we will bring our message to the decision makers and truly influence our professional commitment to better education for visually impaired persons.

Special recognition is given the organization of State Education Consultants for the Visually Handicapped whose paper, "The Role and Responsibility of the State Handicapped," is included in the position papers. The majority of members of this organization are also affiliated with DVH; however, this paper was developed and has been adopted by their organization.

Nancy White Bryant, Ph. D.
President, Division for the Visually Handicapped
1980-81

M. Bernadette Alber, Editor
Chairperson, Publications Committee
1980-81

The Continum of Services for Visually Impaired Students

Nancy White Bryant
Superintendent, Michigan School for the Blind

Historically, visually impaired students have been educated in programs that were made available to them with little thought given to the unique needs of the individual. Until the last decade, residential programs generally served the majority of children in a central location of a given state. As public school programs developed at the local level, the student could choose to attend school in his home community, but he or she might be placed in the available self-contained classroom when an itinerant program was more appropriate . . . or the reverse.

Current federal legislation and that in most states no longer permits fitting children into existing programs, but demands that an individualized educational program appropriate to needs of the student be designed and made available in the least restrictive setting. For a time following the passage of the law, the fitting of round pegs into square holes became more subtle. Program availability in many areas still remained the determining factor in how and where a student would be served.

Today, due process considerations and zealous advocacy for the rights of students to a free and appropriate education make it far less easy to serve students at the convenience of the schools.

A Continuum of Educational Services

The provision of a continuum of service, by design, creates a developmental school experience while taking into account the kind of educational environment most conducive to the growth of an individual. A continuum includes all possible program models which will assure the availability of appropriate delivery systems for visually impaired students regardless of their age, developmental level, or multiplicity of disabilities.

A continuum of services must allow for movement between program units of various design depending upon student need at any point throughout his or her school years. It may be more administratively efficient to adopt a single plan at a given level (i.e., resource rooms for elementary grades and itinerant services for the high school), but such a rigid plan is limiting, and defeats the existence of a true, working continuum. The least restrictive environment should be defined as that which least restricts the child's learning.

Program Alternatives

The continuum of educational services for the visually impaired should contain the capability for providing the following alternative educational plans, if and when they are appropriate for an individual's education.

I. Self-contained Classrooms/Programs
   A. Residential schools
   B. Local day schools
II. Cooperative Programs
   A. Residential schools with private and public day school programs
   B. Special class with regular class in a single school
III. Resource Programs
   A. Resource rooms serving a single school building
   B. Itinerant programs serving several buildings
   C. Short term, special purpose training in a residential school
IV. Consultative Programs
   A. Teacher-Counselor/Consultant support to regular classroom teachers
   B. Coordination of resources for a comprehensive educational plan across disciplines

The Future

We do not minimize the burden that is placed on the schools in meeting the requirements of Public Law 94-142 and similar state laws. The charge becomes even more complex when trying to provide the variety of program components necessary to the continuum in a financially efficient manner. The task requires an extremely creative assignment of resources.

The reality of these restraints to the provision of a continuum must be taken into account even though the law does not speak to the obvious difficulty in doing so. The problems are multiplied for low incidence populations such as the visually impaired, particularly those who live in sparsely populated geographic locations.

Large school systems serving many pupils who have more resources are more able to meet the demands of the law to fulfill individual student needs. This is because greater resources can be more widely distributed to support a variety of program alternatives for larger numbers of participants. Smaller, less financially able school systems or states will continue to struggle with the distribution of resources to meet the same laws governing richer states.

The program alternatives outlined above are not meant to constitute an exhaustive list. Indeed, creative programming on an individual basis is what is promoted by the law. Precise prediction of the needs of a specific school population of visually impaired children for a given year may not be possible.

The schools must, therefore, be in a position to meet needs as they arise. Long-range, flexible programming using versatile staff and other school resources are the tools for the challenge. Each State Department of Education must oversee and promote the existence of a continuum in order to provide all of the services that may conceivably be needed by its residents. Cooperative planning between local education agencies and states must be supported and encouraged in the spirit of conservation of resources and the assurance that a full continuum is available to visually impaired students regardless of their place of residence or individual needs.

There must be no question that the schools will provide the kind of program that a visually impaired student needs to achieve his maximum potential. It is imperative that the schools plan for and provide the best estimate of what constitutes an appropriate educational continuum and assure that it is available, in its entirety, to individual students as needed. Adjustments and compromise are to be expected, but these must be judiciously negotiated as excellence and the ideal program plan are sought for each visually impaired student.

The Role and Function of the Teacher of the Visually Handicapped

Susan Jay Spungin
American Foundation for the Blind

Now more than ever before the field is seeing a need to define the role and function of teachers of the visually handicapped, especially in light of the growing acceptance of the generic special education program models and personnel developed to serve the low incidence population of visually handicapped children. In order to justify the need for trained teachers in vision to serve these children the field must be very clear as to what is actually meant by "a teacher of the visually handicapped." Consequently, what follows are areas of specialized activities to serve as role guidelines for teacher/consultants of the visually handicapped in community day school programs.

I. Assessment and Evaulation
   A. Perform functional vision assessments.
   B. Obtain and interpret eye/medical reports as they relate to educational environments.
   C. Contribute to appropriate portions of the IEP, such as long-term goals, short-term goals, learning style/physical constraints.
   D. Recommend appropriate service delivery plans, including physical education, ancillary support services, equipment, time frame.
   E. Recommend appropriate specialized evaluations as needed, such as low vision, orientation and mobility, psychological, and adaptive physical education.
   F. Confer with special services to aid in evaluation.
   G. Assist in determining the eligibility and the appropriate placement of visually handicapped children.
   H. Participate in the assessment of each pupil, and interpret results to classroom teachers and others.

II. Educational and Instructional Strategies: Learning Environment
   A. Assure that the student is trained in the use of, and has available, all devices and technological apparatus useful to the process of academic learning.
   B. Assure that the classroom teacher fully understands the unique needs of children with visual losses.
   C. Act as a catalyst in developing understanding of visual loss with sighted children.
   D. Interpret adjustments needed in assignments or standards in the regular classroom.
   E. Assure that the student has all educational materials in the appropriate media.
   F. Consult with the classroom teachers regarding methodology to be used as visually handicapped children are included in classroom learning experiences.
   G. Instruct the student in academic subjects and activities requiring adaptation and reinforcement as a direct result of visual handicap

III. Educational and Instructional Strategies: Unique Curriculum
   A. Braille Reading and Writing – It may be necessary for the teacher of the visually handicapped to provide beginning braille reading instruction and to introduce the child to such mechanical aspects of reading as: top of the page, bottom of the page, use of fingers, tracking, etc. Introduction of writing is also the responsibility of the teacher of the visually handicapped. Braille writers and slates and styli are unfamiliar learning tools to the classroom teacher; the classroom teacher should not be expected to master the mechanics of either. The teacher of the visually handicapped will possess the necessary skills in braille mathematics and in braille music, and will provide instruction to students in their use.
   B. Handwriting – For the partially seeing child, certain aspects of handwriting in respect to size and configuration may be the responsibility of the teacher of the visually handicapped. The teaching of signature writing, and, if appropriate, additional handwriting skills to functionally blind children is certainly a responsibility.

C. Typewriting – For most low vision children and fucntionally blind children typing will be the major means of communication between the child and sighted peers, parents, and teachers. This is a skill which should be carefully and thoroughly taught by the teacher of the visually handicapped as soon as the pupil has sufficient motor skills.

D. Large Print and Optical Aids – It may be necessary for the teacher of the visually handicapped to help low vision children utilize reading aids in order to fully benefit in the regular classroom.

E. Listening Skills – Both partially seeing and functionally blind students need to learn good listening skills. Listening becomes extremely important in the secondary grades when print reading assignments become long and laborious. It is necessary for the visually handicapped child to begin a sequential course of study in the development of listening skills as early as possible. The development of listening skills is not confined to the use of an alternate reading system. It is important in mobility, in social conversation, and in interpreting a variety of auditory signals received from the environment.

F. Study Skills – Skimming braille or large print materials, outlining in braille or large print, searching for significant information in recorded materials, and other skills may need to be taught by the teacher of the visually handicapped.

G. Tactual Skills – The development of tactual skills is not confined to the reading of braille. Visually handicapped students should be taught to use their fingers and hands well in order to explore, identify, and appreciate all tangible materials in their environment.

H. Visual Efficiency – This underlines achievement in every skill area for the partially seeing pupil: academic, psychomotor skills, self-help, and vocational and social skills. The use of residual vision is one of the most important aspects of the curriculum offered by the teacher of the visually handicapped.

I. Motor Development – The teacher of the visually handicapped must know the potential problem areas in motor development for visually handicapped children. Body image, body in space concepts, visual motor skills, etc., are included in this area.

J. Physical Education – This is often a problem for visually handicapped pupils in public schools. Students must be assisted in understanding and participating in team games. Physical fitness must be stressed.

K. Orientation and Mobility – Much of the orientation and mobility needs of the student are the responsibility of qualified orientation and mobility instructors. The responsibilities of, and the relationshp between the teachers of the visually handicapped and the orientation and mobility instructors must be clearly defined. It is possible that the former will assume responsibility for assuring that students develop in sensory motor, gross, and fine motor skills. Visually handicapped children must be taught to move in space and to be aware of the environment around them. They must learn to use tactual and auditory cues to assist and identify their position in space and the relative position of other persons and objects around them.

L. Concept Development – The teacher of the visually handicapped shares with others the responsibility for the development of basic concepts by the student. Future learning is dependent upon the student's thorough understanding and association, discrimination, and relationships.

M. Activities of Daily Living – Thorough knowledge of the activities and techniques of daily living or personal management skills is needed to create independence so that visually handicapped students may become acceptable and personable beings – free of mannerisms, and socially attractive to others. Specific objectives include but are not limited to: a) caring for personal needs; b) developing adequate eating habits; c) mastering the process and routine of dressing and undressing; d) developing a positive self-image.

N. Reasoning – The ability to reason, especially in the abstract, may require specific instruction from the teacher of the visually handicapped. Students may need assistance in the development of decision-making skills, problem solving, and learning to live with occasional frustration and failure.

O. Human Sexuality – Teachers of the visually handicapped, parents and others share the responsibility for gradual, sequential instruction in human sexuality for visually handicapped students. Because programs in sex education for sighted children assume that much visual information has been previously attained, the visually handicapped pupil may need a specific curriculum taught by appropriate, well-prepared professionals.

P. Leisure and Recreation – The teacher of the visually handicapped, parents, and community agencies share a responsibility to expose the student to, and provide learning opportunities in, a wide variety of leisure time activities which have carry-over value to adult life.

IV. Guidance and Counseling

A. Guidance and counseling assists visually handicapped students in understanding their attitudes and those of others concerning visual impairment; in exploring similarities and differences in relation to all children; in becoming socially aware of oneself and environment; in learning acceptable behavior, in encouraging social interactions with peer groups; and in becoming more independent. Parents should be included in this guidance and counseling process.

B. Career education curriculum that has been developed for sighted children may need supplementary instruction from a teacher of the visually handicapped. Career education encompasses three sequential areas: career awareness, career exploration, and vocational preparation. Each, in sequence, is dependent upon the other. A curriculum in career education for the visually handicapped may be necessary, and implementation of this curriculum may be the responsibility of the teacher of the visually handicapped. At the career exploration level this could well mean many field trips into the community so that the visually handicapped student will have exposure to people and work situations.

C. Vocational counseling is an integral part of programs designed for visually handicapped students. Career awareness begins on the primary level, continuing with career exploration and orientation on the intermediate and secondary level. The teacher in conjunction with the counselor should involve visually handicapped students and parents in this counseling process. Following the assessment of vocational strengths and weaknesses, the students may participate in work-study experience programs as appropriate.

D. Social adjustment skills are an integral part of the curriculum and assist the visually handicapped student to blend smoothly into society. Areas that must be emphasized are spatial awareness and orientation, verbal and nonverbal language, self-help skills, socialization processes, interpersonal relations, human sexuality, and real life experiences.

E. Support services to families should include:
   1. Interpreting implications of visual impairment on overall development;
   2. Referring to appropriate service providers;
   3. Encouraging home involvement in program objectives;
   4. Acting as a resource in the field of vision.

V. Administration and Supervision

A. Communication with Administrators
   1. Pupil information (e.g., visual status, grade level, prototype).
   2. Program goals and activities.
   3. Program evaluation.
   4. Screening and referral procedures.
   5. Relationship to other regular and special education programs and support services.
   6. Budget funds to include funds for travel time, consultation, instruction, salaries, travel expenses, instructional materials, preparation time, conferences and benefits.
   7. In-service programs by and for teacher/consultants of the visually impaired.
   8. Program scheduling to allow adequate time for planning, preparation, reporting, commuting, instruction and staff conferences.
   9. Physical facilities which include instructional settings, offices and storage space.
   10. Advocate on students' educational/legal rights and provider of services.
   11. Provide input into scheduling of students.

B. Record Keeping
   1. Maintain statewide and system-wide student census.
   2. Obtain and maintain student medical and optometric reports.
   3. Maintain records of pupil assessments, individual educational plans, reviews and progress reports with signed parental release forms.
   4. Maintain material and equipment requests.

C. Casefinding, Student Referral Procedures and Scheduling
   1. Act as a vision consultant for system-wide screening, materials, follow-up and recommendations.
   2. Participate in LEA's annual plan for Child Search.
   3. Maintain a referral/communication system with nurses and other school staff.
   4. Obtain current eye reports and begin notification and assessment.
   5. Schedule time for teaching, planning, preparation, travel, and conferences with parents and relevant school and non-school persons.

6. Maintain records and exchange information about visually handicapped students with appropriate personnel and consistent with school district policies regarding confidentiality.
7. Prepare a master schedule to be given to the supervisor and the principal of the building in which students are served.
8. Work within the framework and policies of the school.

VI. School Community Relations

A. School and Community Involvement – The teacher of the visually handicapped should be prepared to interpret the program to school personnel, board of education, and other groups within the community.

B. Program Liaison
   1. Private, state and local agencies and schools
   2. Resources within the community
   3. Medical specialists
   4. Placement transitions
   5. Parents
   6. Related appropriate specialists
   7. Recreation resources

C. Services Development
   1. Coordinate ancillary groups and individuals, such as transcribers, recordists, readers for visually handicapped students, counselors and mobility instructors.
   2. Assist in the initiation of new services as well as coordinating existing ones to bring the varied and necessary related services to the educational program.
   3. Attend professional meetings (in and out of the district) concerned with the education of visually handicapped students.
   4. Keep abreast of new developments in the education of visually handicapped children and youth.
   5. Maintain on-going contact with parents to assure realistic understanding of child's abilities, progress, future goals, community resources, etc.

Specialized Certification

John D. Stager
Education Specialist, Massachusetts Department of Education

From the beginnings of civilization, society has expressed needs for the organization of persons with common interests, concerns, skills, and training into identifiable groups for the purposes of recognition, personal improvement, standard setting and general protection of public interests. Historically, guilds, trade associations, professional societies and governmental units have received the endorsement of society to fulfill these recognized basic needs.

So it has been in the education sphere. The public has expressed its particular needs for the existence of identifiable bodies of professional persons trained in certain educational management and instructional skills in order that the best interests of students may be protected, and that education professionals themselves may receive strength and nurture. This need has shown itself through the development of a multitude of formal and informal professional education associations, and recently through the vigorous development of state and federal bureaucracies organized to "guarantee" individual civil rights to a "free appropriate public education."

The body of trained professionals concerned with the education of students with visual handicaps recently has enjoyed an ever developing pattern of educational techniques, specialized materials and equipment, program models and professional teacher preparation. As a discrete entity, the profession of instruction for visually handicapped students generally is at an unprecedented high level of development in this country.

Simultaneous to this development has been even greater philosophical and consequent legal developments with regard to the manner in which all exceptional students are managed in an educational setting. Public Law 94-142 and its corollary state mandates have literally shaken regular and special education in both the public and private sectors. Through these pieces of legislation, the citizens of this country have placed their educators "on notice" that equal treatment, substantive instruction and positive results are to be the "bottom line" public expectation for handicapped students.

In response, educational administrators and instructors, for the most part, have regrouped in order to be responsive to this public mandate. Procedural safeguards, refined assessment procedures, parent involvement, integrated instructional models, revised professional standards, and bureaucratic program monitoring have all become the watch words of the day. Public fiscal resources, in a period of general decline, have been severely strained in the process of satisfying these dramatic increases in general public expectation.

Specialized instruction and educational support services for visually handicapped students have not been exempted from these pressures. The cries from teachers of the visually handicapped are numerous and more frequent every day. "My administrator of special education doesn't really know (or want to know) what my competencies are, what my appropriate role is, or what the needs of my students are." "The forms are filled out, but I was omitted from the IEP conference, so they assigned my student to a 'resource teacher' and ordered a large print book." "The town didn't want to spend any more money, so they decided that the 'substantially separate class teacher' could see him when necessary." "The parents were told by administration that the new law required no more categorical specialists, so my services aren't required." "A generic specialist has been assigned now to monitor my caseload."

These statements stand in stark contrast to the foregoing discussion. Noncompliance with the law, educational malpractice, regulatory misinterpretation and interpersonal breakdowns are all at work here. In the rush to provide "something" for every student's "special need," enormous omissions in sound educational decision making have taken place.

P.L. 94-142, paragraph 121a.532(e) states, "The evaluation (of a student) is made by a multidisciplinary team or group of persons, including at least one teacher or other specialist with knowledge in the area of suspected disability." This requirement stands, therefore, as a national public expectation that students have unique educational needs in spite of worn out disability labels, noncategorical programming requirements, due process procedural errors and fiscal constraints. In the face of tremendously complex processes in implementing this national mandate, insidious homogenizing influences have crept in which contradict the legislation's basic intent of a "free, appropriate, public education."

Specialized personnel have in many cases been caught in the crossfire of the specialist vs. generalist conflict which even now rages on across this land. Indeed, any professional deserves to succumb in such conflicts if competencies can not be convincingly demonstrated. The public, however, has indicated through P.L. 94-142 that it will continue to rely on governmental units to provide guarantees that appropriately trained professional educators will be pivotly involved in diagnosing, stating and defending the needs of handicapped students.

States, in compliance with this federal mandate, must provide a mechanism for teachers with specialized skills to be publicly recognized as appropriately trained agents to be used in implementing this public wish. Specialized state certification standards are public and private school teachers of the visually handicapped, therefore, must be thoughtfully developed and vigorously enforced. It is only through this mechanism that the public has some degree of guarantee that there will be an appropriate match between diagnosed student needs and specialized instruction.

Funding

Elinor H. Long
Coordinator, Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Center

One would expect that a position statement on funding in respect to visually handicapped children and their educational programs and services would be relatively simple to develop. Ideally, of course, we and others who are their advocates would say that these special children should receive all that they need. But realistically, we recognize that we are living in an age of rising costs, rampant inflation and taxpayer foment, so the ideal may not be practical, even considering the intent and the mechanisms of P.L. 94-142.

Basically many educators of the visually handicapped subscribe to the following positions:

1. That funds supporting general education activities should extend to visually handicapped children, where such activities are appropriate for them.
2. That funds supporting special education should provide special education specific to the unique needs of visually handicapped children.
3. That funds supporting generic activities and services for all handicapped children should be available at least proportionally to the number of visually handicapped, deaf-blind or multi-handicapped visually handicapped available for service.
4. That preferential funding must occasionally be considered due to the low incidence and unique needs of this population.

In those states where the mainstreaming of visually handicapped children was a fairly well accepted practice prior to the mandates of P.L. 94-142, general education had already begun to demonstrate considerable capability for assuming its responsibilities to these children, though continuing to seek special education fiscal support, special instructional materials and technical assistance. In states with relatively limited experience in the mainstreaming of visually handicapped children, P.L. 94-142 should provide sufficient incentive for increasing mainstreaming opportunties for these students.

The issue is not just to open public school doors to admit visually handicapped students. As we pursue further we become aware of the need to emphasize equal opportunity within the school so that visually handicapped children are admitted to physics classes, participate in regular physical education programs, prompt for school plays, carry water for the football teams, ride regular school buses, consult with guidance counselors on career choices and utilize school libraries.

When significant adjustments are required to tailor a general education program or activity to the needs of visually handicapped children, whether as a group requiring a special education resource room program, as itinerant instruction students or as visually handicapped students requiring special education in special facilities such as schools for the blind primary funding should be the responsibility of special education and general education support should be made available. Allowing for organizational variations among the states this basic concept appears to be in practice throughout the country.

We as professionals in the field of the visually handicapped can exert impact in the area of defining the essential elements of special education programs and services for the visually handicapped. In so doing it is important for us to acknowledge that the cost of special education programs and services for visually handicapped children is expensive. Planned future in-services should deal with relative costs in the educational continuum to make us all more sensitive to these factors and to become partners with our administrative officers in seeking ways to most efficiently utilize funds. There must be greater fiscal and programmatic recognition for children who are otherwise handicapped and assigned to some other type of special education classes and require visually handicapped support services. Such children are probably underserved if not inappropriately served when visually handicapped support is not provided. The severely multi-handicapped visually handicapped children are even more costly to educate but no less entitled to or deserving of appropriate programs.

The concept of preferential funding is not unknown to the field of the visually handicapped. As a matter of fact, the federal "Act to promote the education of the blind" was enacted a century ago and still subsidizes a large portion of braille and large print books and other instructional devised and appliances these children require. Title VI-C, which provides funds for education of deaf-blind and other severely handi-

capped children has stimulated significant national development of programs and services necessary for these small minorities in our society.

The Federal Optacon Project not only has provided the nation's blind children with equipment that would have been beyond the capacity of most school systems to purchase but also has sponsored teacher training programs. At the federal level preferential funding has usually focused on some particular area in the visually handicapped field requiring national attention. The success of the programs cited here, and others like them, are recognized by all of us.

Preferential legislation at the state level has also occurred in the education of visually handicapped children. In some states funding is authorized to furnish reader services to visually handicapped students or for the operation of instructional materials centers or libraries. Such statewide programs also make valuable contributions to this population.

Today there is a tendency to avoid "preferential treatment" of any group of handicapped as a kind of reverse discrimination. This is faulty logic, since to insist on equal treatment is a denial of individual differences. Besides, "prioritizing of need" is accepted practice in planning. According to program plan guidelines, states are expected to give priority attention to the unserved and to the more severe.

Those of us concerned with visually handicapped children are inclined to favor priority based on low incidence since the visually handicapped, deaf-blind and severely multi-handicapped children are a minority among the handicapped minority and moreover are not only clustered around our urban centers where resources are usually varied and prevalent, but also are found living in the most remote and isolated areas that have little to offer.

These factors result in tremendous difficulty for building advocacy networks, for providing meaningful inservice for teachers of visually handicapped, for providing specialized inservice for regular educators working with these children, for parent training, for organizing and implementing preschool and for infant stimulation programs.

A common tendency today is to provide generic funding for activities such as these, since it is intended that all handicapped children will appropriately benefit or participate. But then whatever activities are offered through these funds tend also to be generic in approach, aimed mainly at those problems and needs the handicapped have in common, seldom dealing directly with those special problems and needs which are vital to the minorities within the handicapped population.

Generic approaches to teacher inservice and to parent training, when supposed to be in the interest of the visually handicapped, are of value up to the point where they need to be specific. After that point is reached they can actually be damaging. We must be on guard against utilization of generic funding for generic activities at the exclusion of specific activities to benefit a specific group such as the visually handicapped.

One way to prevent such occurrence is to administratively apportion generic funds on the basis of the total number of children presented for service in a given state. Then visually handicapped children and other minorities could be assured of their fair share of the funds available, whether for generic or for specific activities, or for a combination of both.

Finally, our position on funding should include a stand for cooperation with other handicapped interest groups and against the handicapped having to compete with each other. Some friendly competition, of course, can be healthy and stimulating. But we can ill afford competition when vital education programs and services are at stake. All handicapped children are to be served, and all are to be served appropriately. Adequate, appropriate funding, combined with meticulous, creative fiscal and program planning, is basic to all our efforts in the interest of our special children.

The Role and Responsibility of the State Education Consultant for the Visually Handicapped

Adopted by the State Education Consultants for the Visually Handicapped

In order that visually handicapped children and youth may be assured of receiving a free, appropriate, public education of consistently high quality, state departments of education must maintain at least one full-time consultant specifically trained and experienced in education of the visually handicapped and assigned responsibility for educational programming for visually handicapped children and youth.

Since the 1940s there have been persons in state departments of education with titles similar to "state education consultant for the visually handicapped." From the beginning, these persons were primary advocates to insure appropriate acceptance of the visually handicapped child into the regular education program. Later in the 1960s, they expanded their activities to include conducting inservice training programs and setting up specialized materials centers. Throughout the three decades, state consultants were instrumental in the development and coordination of volunteer services to produce textbooks and other specialized educational materials. During the 1970s, state special education laws and federal legislation, particularly Public Law 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, brought new challenges, increased demands, and major changes in the role and responsibilities of the state education consultants for the visually handicapped.

Presently, the necessity for continuation of a strong coordination and support role within state departments of education specifically for programs and services to visually handicapped children and youth is a low priority for many state education leaders. The need for these state consultants' specialized skills is frequently unrecognzied in spite of their long and successful history of encouraging the integration of visually handicapped students into regular education programs. In addition, services for the visually handicapped must often compete with higher incidence handicapped populations and previously unserved populations for representation and funds.

Public Law 94-142 and Section 504 of Public Law 94-112 have had a tremendous impact on the role and responsibilities of leadership personnel in all special education categorical areas. In most states, the implementation of these laws has demanded changes in function for state department personnel. They are shifting from responsibility for particular program areas such as vision to monitoring compliance with state and federal regulations. However, if the quality of programs for visually handicapped students at the local level is not to be eroded, concerned professionals must define roles and responsibilities that are essential to the effective functioning of state education consultants for the visually handicapped so that creative leadership may be provided to the local school districts. To assure the free, appropriate, public education for all visually handicapped students, state education consultants for the visually handicapped children and youth are necessary to:

- Serve as advocates for the formation and implementation of appropriate laws, regulations, and program standards affecting the educational well-being of all visually handicapped students;
- Provide leadership to teachers in local and regional education programs and to function as advocates for them with local administrators;
- Provide an on-going program of local administrative professional development in order to raise the level of technical expertise for those local supervisors responsible for making important daily programmatic decisions;
- Serve as catalysts for the development of teacher-designed inservice opportunities;
- Serve as consultants to local school district personnel as they conduct appropriately designed program evaluation and improvement practices;
- Design and administer systematic child search plans which will effectively identify students needing specialized educational services related to visual handicaps;
- Act as analysts of census data in order to recommend and enforce the establishment of a continuum of appropriate program models to serve all identified students, regardless of the students' educational level or geographic location;

- Assure that adequate federal, state, and local funding programs are provided to support state-wide special education delivery systems;
- Serve as advocates for the development and maintenance of comprehensive delivery systems for specialized educational materials and equipment to support visually handicapped students in the least restrictive settings;
- Assure that appropriate related services are provided as necessary within the special education delivery systems;
- Design and administer public communication systems which will clearly describe all programs and services potentially necessary for visually handicapped students to receive a free, appropriate, public education;
- Serve to foster interagency, intra-agency, and medical community cooperation to insure the smooth provision of other necessary social, vocational, rehabilitation, medical, and welfare services to visually handicapped students in concert with the total educational system;
- Serve as information channels to the U.S. Education Department, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the long range development of appropriate programs, services, and technology;
- Advise teacher-training institutions of evolving competencies needed for teachers of the visually handicapped; and
- Maintain regular communication with national professional organizations and consumer groups to insure uniformity of service delivery patterns and to keep abreast of the latest policy, curricular, technological and program developments.

To perform these tasks, and to function adequately as leaders, state education consultants for the visually handicapped must have a background of knowledge and understanding about the special educational needs of visually handicapped students and must possess skill in administration and consultation. The following competencies are considered to be essential:

- Ability to design and implement an appropriate special education service delivery system for all visually handicapped students;
- Ability to supervise, advocate for, coordinate, and support teachers who work with visually handicapped students at the local and regional levels;
- Skill to assess, determine priorities, and manage time and resources;
- Ability to secure funds and manage fiscal matters;
- Ability to utilize skills of a change agent to establish appropriate service delivery systems;
- Ability to plan and implement on-going staff development;
- Ability to work effectively with other professionals such as local and state education officials, instructional materials center personnel, legislators, college/university personnel, parents, community volunteers, etc.;
- Ability to engage in meaningful problem solving;
- Skill in analyzing and utilizing the political communications systems;
- Ability to serve in an advocacy role;
- Ability to apply research skills to the solution of educational problems;
- Ability to select and manage appropriate evaluation procedures for handicapped students and programs; and
- Skill in facilitation and consultation.

With these competencies, a state education consultant can serve in an advocacy role to assure that visually handicapped children and youth are adequately represented at state and national levels. To do so effectively, however, requires the primary foci and priorities of the state education consultant for visually handicapped be to assure that appropriate special education delivery systems for the visually handicapped exist and to provide support critically necessary for teachers and administrators at the local and regional levels.